



# Community Engagement Committee Meeting

July 17, 2019 – Imperial Irrigation District, El Centro CA

Prepared by the Consensus Building Institute (CBI)

## Meeting in Brief

- The State introduced new members of its Salton Sea team from the CA Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) and Department of Water Resources (DWR) and updated the Committee on the status of the SCH (Species Conservation Habitat) project and roadmap for SCH and dust suppression projects in the upcoming year.
- The Committee discussed the February workshop in Brawley and other potential next steps for conducting local engagement on the SCH project.
- Alianza presented final results from its community engagement study and recommendations to the State on engaging local communities in SSMP projects. The State shared preliminary feedback and appreciation for the input, with several aspects of the recommendations already having an impact on State planning.

[Click here](#) for meeting agenda and materials. If you would like digital copies of any of the presentations shared at the meeting, please email Stephanie Horii at [shorii@cbi.org](mailto:shorii@cbi.org).

## Action Items

Who	What	Timeline
All	Email Stephanie Horii at CBI, <a href="mailto:shorii@cbi.org">shorii@cbi.org</a> , if you want to be on the CC list for this Committee and are not currently on it.  Sign up on the SSMP listserv [ <a href="#">link</a> ] if you wish to receive SSMP updates from the State, such as meeting or project announcements, and have not yet signed up.	August-September
All	Following CBI's emailing of draft meeting summary to Committee (with meeting presentations attached), send suggested edits to Stephanie Horii at CBI, <a href="mailto:shorii@cbi.org">shorii@cbi.org</a> .	August
State/CNRA	Follow up with CBI following State meeting on 8/15 regarding updates to Committee structure and follow up with Committees generally	End of August
State/CNRA	Follow up with Ryan, Josh and Co-Chairs after State meeting on 8/15 to discuss upcoming engagement activities, including North Lake	End of August

## State Update

Lisa Lien-Mager, Deputy Secretary of Communication at CNRA, joined the Co-Chairs in welcoming members of the Committee and introducing herself on behalf of the State and Secretary Crowfoot. She explained the State's plans to increase Salton Sea communications and to engage the Advisory Committee process in moving projects forward. Upcoming blogs and updates regarding the State's

progress on the SSMP may be found on the CNRA website [[link](#)] and will be distributed through the SSMP listserv. To sign up for the SSMP listserv, go to the CNRA's Salton Sea page [[link](#)].

Vivien Maisonneuve introduced several Salton Sea staff from the Department of Water Resources (DWR), including Evon Willhoff, a DWR Program Manager who will be helping to ensure there is an effective two-way communication channel with local stakeholders on project planning and will be a State liaison to this Committee. The State shared its roadmap for the upcoming year for the SCH (Species Conservation Habitat) project and the fact that three highly qualified contractors have been selected as part of the SCH Request for Qualifications for building the project. The work should begin by next summer and will extend for roughly 3.5 years. The State provided brief updates on its other dust suppression projects, including Bruchard Road and Bombay Beach, as well as the development of the North Lake project, which is in exploratory stages with Riverside County. For a digital copy of the meeting presentation, email [shorii@cbl.org](mailto:shorii@cbl.org).

## **Report from Community Workshop in Brawley**

Josh Zipperman of Burke Rix, the State's SSMP communications consultant, shared an update from the SCH community workshop in February. The project represented a new approach by the State, with guidance from the Engagement Committee, to engage local communities in a more participatory and accessible format, regarding local priorities and ideas for the project. The input reflected local interest in trails, parks, and other amenities, as well as educational opportunities. The meeting format and input is summarized [here](#). Following the presentation, Committee members suggested it could be helpful for members to be more involved in outreach (e.g., through radio spots, bilingual outreach, and sharing flyers) as well as in facilitating and participating in workshop discussions. These needs, opportunities, and expectations should be clarified prior to the next workshop.

DWR views many of these priorities as realistic, including the overall local interest in seeing community benefits from the State's investment at the Salton Sea. The State plans to work with its SCH contractor to ensure turnarounds for buses for site visits, as well as restrooms, wildlife viewing, signage, and access points. (It is clear that boating and direct access to water or levees will not be possible for this project.) Once the initial project is constructed, it may be possible to add public access features and other ways to support local public health. The State will also work with its SCH contractor to engage the local workforce in project construction.

## **Alianza SSMP Community Engagement Study and Recommendations**

Christian Rodriguez and Lauren Elachi from KDI, an organizational member of Alianza Coachella Valley, presented the findings and recommendations from the final report, following the presentation at the last Engagement Committee meeting regarding the purpose, goals, and structure of the study. Broad recommendations to the State in SSMP planning included seeking local expertise and partnerships, soliciting local input in areas that are implementable, and maximizing opportunities for local leadership and empowerment of local communities. Specific recommendations included adopting an engagement budget for each project, providing for community-led data collection, focusing on youth education, using engaging graphics and visuals to help residents visualize what the SSMP could look like and why to care, incorporating community design parameters, and integrating pilot projects and amenities early in each project to create good will, visibility, and interest at the local level.

The report recommendations were well timed and are already having a significant impact on State planning, according to Lisa Lien-Mager from CNRA. Key take-aways for the State have included prioritizing community benefits in the first phase of each project; building out a timeline and budget for community engagement in each project, starting with SCH; building engagement into the criteria for design-build contractors; and building transparency at the state level regarding projects and planning. The State is interested in the concept of youth ambassadors and working to shape the projects, such as at the North Lake, with involvement from local youth. The State plans to engage this Committee closely in these efforts moving forward.

For SCH, while the contractor will be on the ground day-to-day, DWR will continue to consult with this Committee regarding a meaningful long-term local engagement strategy.

## General and Public Comment

- There is a concern that the Salton Sea Recreational Area is being left out of the SSMP. This is on the State's radar.
- It may be useful to have a State presence with information about the SSMP at the February Riverside County festival.
- The Sea and Desert Interpretive Center gets frequent questions about the Salton Sea and would be a useful outreach venue for the State to share SSMP outreach materials.
- There continues to be local frustration with the State's seeming lack of progress on the Salton Sea. Red Hill Bay is an example, at which there was a ribbon-cutting ceremony followed by a perceived lack of action. Desert Shores continues to be an area of disrepair and could greatly use State action.
- There is interest in the State thinking beyond recreation to other local community needs (e.g., public health and education).
- The State should keep local communities informed of its progress in dust suppression projects as well as habitat projects. While these may not be as exciting, they are of great importance.
- The State should consider job creation goals as a specific criterion for new contractors.

## Meeting Attendees

Several community, Tribal, and agency stakeholders attended the meeting, in addition to the following Committee members and state staff liaisons.

### State of California

Vivien Maisonneuve, Evon Willhoff, and Allen Young, DWR Liaisons to Committee  
 Ted Frink, Michal Koller, Vic Nguyen (by phone), and Steven Garcia, DWR  
 Lisa Lien-Mager, Deputy Secretary for Communication, CNRA  
 Samantha Haynes and Arturo Delgado, CDFW

### Members Attending (some by phone)

Present			
	Javier	Aceves	Cabazon Band of Mission Indians
	Tom	Anderson	US Fish and Wildlife Services
	Patricia	Cooper	Riverside County
	Maria	Davydova	RWQCB
	Debi	Elton	Sea and Desert Interpretive Center
	Sarah	Friedman	Sierra Club California

✓ ALT	Miguel	Hernandez	Comité Cívico del Valle (CCV)
	Sahara	Huazano	Alianza Coachella Valley
	Genevieve	Johnson	Bureau of Reclamation Lower Colorado Region
	Emmanuel	Martinez	Imperial Irrigation District
	Melanie	McLees Cox	SSAC
✓	Patsy	Meister	Sea and Desert Interpretive Center
	Kerry	Morrison	EcoMedia Compass
	Luis	Olmedo	Comité Cívico del Valle (CCV)
✓	Silvia	Paz	Alianza Coachella Valley (Co-Chair)
	Esmeralda	Perez	Riverside County
✓	Marco	Perez	29 Palms Band of Morongo Indians
	Alex	Rodriguez	DCG Public Affairs
	Phil	Rosentrater	Salton Sea Authority
	Frank	Ruiz	Audubon California
	Altrena	Santillanes	Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians
✓	Darren	Simon	SDCWA
	Dennis	Stephen	California State Parks
✓	Rebecca	Terrazas-Baxter	County of Imperial (Co-Chair)
✓	Christian	Rodriguez	Kounkuey Design Initiative (KDI)
	Lauren	Elachi	Kounkuey Design Initiative (KDI)

#### State Consultant

Josh Zipperman, Senior Associate, Burke Rix Communications

#### CBI Facilitation Support

Ryan Golten, Senior Mediator, CBI